United Nations S/2007/400

Security Council

Distr.: General
3 July 2007

Original: English

Report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict in Chad

Summary

The present report has been prepared pursuant to the provisions of Security Council resolution 1612 (2005) and is presented to the Security Council as the first country report on the situation of children and armed conflict in Chad. The report covers the period from January 2006 to May 2007, and details grave violations perpetrated against children in Chad, including the recruitment and use of children by armed forces and groups; the killing and maiming of children, especially by landmines and unexploded ordnance (UXOs); rape and other grave sexual violence, especially against girls; and the denial of humanitarian access and targeting of humanitarian personnel and assets. The report identifies both State and non-State parties responsible for such violations.

The report emphasizes the convergence of three distinct yet interrelated dimensions of conflict in Chad: (a) the outbreak of violence in the eastern part of the country between government forces and Chadian armed opposition groups, (b) intercommunal and ethnically based violence in the east, and (c) the Darfur conflict and tensions between Chad and Sudan along their common border, which has led to a proliferation of arms and cross-border banditry. These circumstances have led to a significant increase in grave child rights violations and impunity for crimes against children.

The report acknowledges the significant challenges in addressing child rights violations in Chad and urges the international community to reinforce the capacity of the Government of Chad to respond in a timely and comprehensive manner to grave violations. It urges State and non-State parties to enter into dialogue with the United Nations towards the preparation of action plans to end the recruitment and use of children by armed forces and groups, as well as other grave violations of children's rights. The report also calls on all the parties to the conflict to comply with international humanitarian law and ensure the safety of humanitarian workers and assets, and strongly recommends rigorous investigations and prosecutions of crimes against children to address impunity.

07-39023 (E) 120707

I. Introduction

1. The present report, prepared pursuant to the provisions of Security Council resolution 1612 (2005), covers the period from 1 January 2006 to 30 May 2007. It has been prepared on the basis of consultation with United Nations agencies and departments, as well as child protection focal points of humanitarian agencies, non-governmental organizations and national authorities. The incidents of violations cited during the reporting period serve to illustrate the nature and trend of violations against children's rights in Chad. The report identifies parties to the conflict responsible for several categories of grave violations, including the killing and maiming of children, the recruitment and use of children by armed forces and groups, abductions, rape and other grave sexual violence and abuse, and targeting of humanitarian personnel and denial of access for child protection purposes. The report also highlights the commitments made by the Government of Chad for the protection of children's rights and their integration into programmes and activities undertaken to strengthen protection.

II. Political, military and social developments in Chad

2. The history of Chad following independence in 1960 has been marked by instability and violence, initially between the mainly Muslim north and the predominantly Christian and animist south. Since the overthrow of former President Hissein Habré in 1990, the reign of the current President, Idriss Déby, has been characterized by internal political instability and conflict, despite an increase in the Government's resources due to rising revenue from the country's growing oil exports. The reign of the present regime has also been characterized by the concentration of power in President Déby's Zaghawa ethnic group, which constitutes a minority of less than 3 per cent of the Chadian population. This has exacerbated ethnic tension in the country. At the same time, there have been significant cleavages within the president's own Zaghawa dominated ruling party and within his immediate family circle.

3. An armed insurrection ensued in the north of Chad in 1998, partially as a response to efforts to concentrate the country's decision-making processes around the presidency, including through certain constitutional amendments. Peace agreements signed in 2002 and 2003 proved to be unsustainable. Since 2003, the conflict in neighbouring Sudan's Darfur region has spilled across the border into Chad causing a massive refugee flow and dire humanitarian crisis in the country. The conflict in Darfur has also further exacerbated internal political and ethnic tensions in Chad, including within the president's party and the army, mainly due to the fact that several of the parties to the conflict in Darfur include members of the Zaghawa ethnic group.

4. The lack of legitimacy of President Déby in the eyes of the main opposition political parties has been a significant factor in the internal political tensions. These parties and civil society groups contend that since 1996 the presidential and legislative elections have not been credible, and they are calling for immediate reform of the electoral law, updating of the voter's register and restructuring of the Independent National Electoral Commission. Furthermore, constitutional changes engineered in June 2005 to enable President Déby to run for a third term in office, from 2006 to 2011, have heightened tension and political opposition to the

president, manifesting themselves in the outbreak of violent conflict in the eastern region of Chad between government forces and Chadian armed opposition groups. This conflict is primarily a dispute over the control of State power and natural resources, particularly oil revenues. There is also intercommunal and ethnically based violence in eastern Chad, mainly between Arab and non-Arab communities, fuelled by clan disputes and competition for livelihood resources such as water and grazing land. Cross-border attacks by Janjaweed militias from the Sudan, as well as more recently constituted village-level self-defence ethnic militias, have exacerbated this dimension of the conflict. The tension between Chad and the Sudan along their common border represents a third element of the conflict in the eastern region. The challenges of establishing security and durable peace are related partially to the fact that these three aspects of the conflict in eastern Chad are at times distinct but at times closely interconnected. Although there has been a reduction in the number of clashes between the Chadian National Army (Armée nationale tchadienne) and the Chadian rebels since February 2007, tensions remain high with fears that rebels will attack in order to gain ground prior to the rainy season. The primary areas of concern are Adre and Daguessa.

5 The Darfur crisis has enabled Chadian armed opposition groups to use the Sudan as a springboard for attacks against Chadian government forces, and, in turn, Sudanese armed groups opposing the Government of the Sudan, including the Justice and Equality Movement and the Sudanese Liberation Army, have found support and harbour in eastern Chad. In general, the Darfur conflict has led to proliferation of arms and cross-border banditry, raised the level of violence in Chad, and created an enabling environment for systematic human rights violations, including grave violations against children.

6. The Chadian National Army is believed to be strengthening its presence in eastern Chad, which has, since the beginning of the armed conflict, become the main base of operations of Chadian armed opposition groups. These groups are reportedly also taking up positions in the Tibesti region near Chad's border with the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya. Significantly, in December 2006 an agreement was reached between the Government of Chad and a faction of the United Front for Change (Front uni pour le changement), led by Mahamat Nour. Under that agreement the United Front for Change pledged to end its armed opposition, its fighters were granted amnesty, and Mahamat Nour was recently appointed Minister of Defence. There has also been a process of integration of combatants of the United Front for Change into the Chadian National Army.

7. In spite of the multiplication of meetings between presidents Déby of Chad and Bashir of the Sudan to discuss the normalization of relations between their two countries, the situation on the ground remains dire as no concrete measures have been undertaken so far to implement the numerous peace agreements and end the activities of the Chadian and Sudanese rebel groups along the Chad-Sudan border. The most recent peace deal between the two countries was reached on 2 May 2007 in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, under the aegis of King Abdullah. Under the new agreement, they reaffirmed their readiness to create a joint force and to deploy observers along their common borders. In addition, the two leaders renewed their determination to end support for each other's armed rebellion and the Government of Chad has reportedly asked the Darfur rebel groups based on its territory to leave the country. Combined with instability in the Central African Republic, there are

serious concerns about the prospects of sustainable peace and security in the entire subregion.

8. On the political front, the Government has agreed to engage in discussions with the opposition parties on electoral reforms in order to reach a consensus on this long-standing and contentious issue.

Humanitarian situation

9. The dramatic deterioration of the security environment in eastern Chad since 2006 carries grave implications for the civilian population. Sudanese refugees from Darfur, who number approximately 235,000, some 44,000 refugees from the Central African Republic, as well as an estimated 150,000 internally displaced Chadians, are especially vulnerable. Most of the 12 refugee camps in eastern Chad are between 60 and 80 kilometres from the Chad-Sudan border, which has made these locations susceptible to cross-border attacks. Since March 2006, there have been consistent reports of refugee camps and internally displaced persons sites and surrounding communities being more affected by the volatile security situation and becoming prime recruiting grounds for the various armed groups, which also includes the forced recruitment by and association of children with armed elements. The militarization in eastern Chad has seriously infringed on the civilian and humanitarian character of refugee camps and internally displaced persons sites. Due to the generalized and acute insecurity and, in particular, following the most recent attacks against the villages of Tiero and Marena in the Dar Sila department, some 20,000 Chadian refugees fled across the border into Darfur.

10. The attacks against the civilian communities, combined with considerable challenges and dangers for humanitarian actors, makes Chad an unfolding humanitarian crisis. The targeting of the assets of humanitarian personnel by parties to the conflict has become an unacceptable pattern. Although there have been some efforts made by the Chadian authorities to restore a measure of law and order in eastern Chad, for the most part the high levels of insecurity in the east have not been adequately addressed by the Chadian security apparatus. In response, there have been various initiatives led by United Nations agencies and partners, including a memorandum of understanding on the maintenance of security in and around the camps in eastern Chad agreed between the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and Chadian authorities.

Armed forces and groups operating in Chad

11. The armed and security forces of the Government of Chad consist of the Chadian National Army, the air force, the gendarmerie, the State security force (Direction des services de sécurité des institutions de l'Etat (formerly Republican Guard)), and the Chadian police force. It should be noted that, depending mostly on location, the gendarmerie carry out at times regular policing functions, while at other times they perform a more traditional military role of protecting the sovereign and territorial integrity of Chad.

12. The landscape of Chadian armed opposition groups is complex and shifting, making it difficult to determine their composition and leadership at any given point in time, and thus to establish specific responsibility for grave violations against children's rights. In recent years the structure of these armed elements has become increasingly fractured with the formation of a multiplicity of groupings that often

reflect personalized, clan-based military and economic agendas. These groups are generally small in size and limited in their capacity, and tend to temporarily join forces in broader alliances that are generally fluid and frequently undergo changes.

13. In 2005-2006 the two principal Chadian ethnically based armed opposition groups were the United Front for Change (Tama ethnicity, under the leadership of Mahamat Nour) and the Union of Forces for Change (Union des forces du changement). However, at the end of 2006 these two groups realigned into three principal alliances active in the east: the Union of Forces for Democracy and Development (Union des forces pour la démocratie et le developpement, Goran ethnicity, under the leadership of Mahamat Nouri), the Movement of the Forces for Change (Rassemblement des forces du changement, Zaghawa ethnicity, under the leadership of Timane Erdimi), and the Chadian National Concord (Concorde nationale tchadienne, Arab ethnicity, under the leadership of Hassan Saleh Al-Djinedi).

14. There are also a number of secondary rebel groups that are a lesser threat to the Government of Chad because of their small size and relative lack of formal organization. However, they can be utilized on an ad hoc basis as clan-based proxies by larger groups to secure local gains. These groups include a faction of the United Front for Change and remnants of the Movement for Democracy and Justice (Mouvement pour la démocratie et la justice au tchad), as well as a number of other groupings.

15. In addition to the cited Chadian groups, the presence of some Sudanese armed elements[1] has also been reported in the eastern region of Chad, particularly around Bahai. This includes the Justice and Equality Movement and the Sudanese Liberation Army (G19 breakaway faction), as well as cross-border raids by Janjaweed militias.

16. A more recent phenomenon has been the formation of village-level and ethnically based self-defence militias, which are believed to draw support primarily from the Government of Chad. In some cases they are also being trained and supplied by Sudanese rebel groups. At present, these militias are generally composed of small groups of armed elements and organized on an ad hoc basis. These groups are in response to acute insecurity in the border zones and the inability of the Chadian Government to protect civilian communities. In spite of some preliminary indications, it remains difficult to determine to which degree the Chadian Government is responsible for facilitating the formation and support of these militias through training and provision of arms.

III. Grave violations of children's rights

Context of child rights violations

17. The estimated population of Chad is 9 million people, 5 million of whom are children below the age of 18 years. It should be noted also that of the quarter of a

[1] The term *toro-boro* has also been applied to Sudanese rebel groups by the Sudanese Government and civilians in Darfur. In eastern Chad the term *toro-bora* refers to both Sudanese rebel groups and Chadian self-defence militias that have received support, training or sponsorship from Sudanese rebels.

million Sudanese refugees in Chad, some 138,000 are children. In the last decade, the child rights situation has steadily deteriorated, particularly as a consequence of the internal political unrest and armed conflict, especially in the east. The spillover of the Darfur conflict has exacerbated child rights violations. In this context, there are significant concerns regarding systematic infringements of the most fundamental rights of children, including the six categories of grave violations that are the central focus of the present report. In addition to these priority areas, it is also important to highlight serious concerns on a number of other child rights violations, such as utilization of child domestic workers in urban areas, where girls around 10 years of age are exploited for housework with minimal payment. In one area in the south of the country, there are also concerns related to livestock herders who are mainly young boys. The norm is for livestock owners to reach an agreement with parents of children that are generally between 10 and 12 years of age, with the endorsement of community leaders. In addition, these children are often exposed to serious injury and maiming through harsh physical punishment, such as the burning of limbs, for losing or injuring of an animal. In general, the forms of child labour constitute full-time engagements, leaving the children with limited possibilities for education. There are also concerns related to the trafficking of children within Chad, which is often related to forced labour and sexual exploitation, as well as trafficking of Chadian children to neighbouring countries. The practice of forced and early marriage of girls, and female genital mutilation are also of concern. The practice of female genital mutilation differs greatly along ethnic and regional lines. Nationwide, it is estimated that 45 per cent of females are victims of some form of this practice.

Recruitment and use of children

18. The phenomenon of forced recruitment and association of children with armed forces and groups is widespread in the country, especially in the east where a number of Chadian armed opposition groups and militias are active.[2] According to United Nations sources, an increase in recruitment of children in the Chadian eastern region has been witnessed in 2006 and 2007. For a variety of reasons, including cultural and economic, it remains difficult to get comprehensive information on this violation. The international community is planning to increase its capacity to respond to the release of a projected 7,000 to 10,000 children used for a number of different combat and non-combat roles, such as bodyguards, drivers and military camp workers. United Nations agencies and other child protection workers have documented relatively few girls associated with fighting forces and groups.

[2] International humanitarian law and human rights law set at 15 the minimum age for recruitment and participation in hostilities. (See Protocol I Additional to the Geneva Convention of 12 August 1949, and relating to the Protection of Victims of International Armed Conflicts (Protocol I), article 77 (2); Protocol II Additional to the Geneva Convention of 12 August 1949, and relating to the Protection of Victims of Non-International Armed Conflicts (Protocol II), article 4 (3) (c); and Convention on the Rights of the Child, article 38 (3)). The Optional protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, on the involvement of children in armed conflict, adopted by the General Assembly on 25 May 2000, resolution 54/263, annex I, raises the age at which participation in armed conflicts is permitted from 15 to 18 years of age, and establishes a ban on compulsory recruitment below 18 years of age (articles 1 and 2). The Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, in its article 8, describes conscripting or enlisting children under the age of 15 years into the national armed forces or using them to participate actively in hostilities as a war crime. The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child prohibits the recruitment or direct participation in hostilities or internal strife of anyone under the age of 18 years.

19. It should also be noted that there is a cultural aspect to the use of children in armed forces and groups in Chad. In cultural terms, in eastern Chad and in Darfur, boys are considered adults at puberty, which they attain in the early teenage years and is often formalized by the ceremony of circumcision. Some parents and communities consider that with the attainment of manhood, a boy becomes entitled to protect the community and/or the ethnic group by joining a community defence militia or other armed group. Hence, there are no community-grounded taboos related to the association of children in their early teenage years with armed groups.

20. The recruitment of children also has an economic dimension. Rebel groups have been known to attract new members by offering financial compensation upon joining as well as a monthly salary. Children have the same entitlements as adults. With limited economic opportunities in eastern Chad, children may consider that they have no other option than to join armed groups, especially to alleviate the economic burden of families. The rarity of birth certificates and identification cards and the subsequent difficulty in determining the exact age of children adds another complicating factor.

21. Therefore, it has been a significant challenge for United Nation agencies to respond to the widespread instances of child recruitment and association of children with armed forces and groups, and to document and establish specific responsibility for recruitment and other grave violations in a climate which is additionally characterized by the sudden shifting of alliances and groupings. It should also be noted that there has been no prosecution of recruiters to date.

Chadian National Army, including the newly integrated United Front for Change

22. The Government of Chad ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child in May 2002. The national law N°01/PCE/CEDNACVG/91, adopted in January 1991, stipulates that the minimum age of recruitment into the Chadian National Army is 18 years of age and that the minimum age for conscription is 20 years of age. While there is no evidence of a systematic policy of child recruitment by the Chadian National Army, the presence of children associated with the Army has been witnessed by United Nations agencies and other child protection actors.

23. In its statement at the Paris Principles and Commitments Conference held in February 2007, the Chadian delegation stated that in the midst of the conflict that the country had experienced since 1990, children had been associated with armed forces and groups. The delegation also added that there was a possibility that elements of the Chadian National Army had recruited and used children. Towards the end of 2006, the humanitarian community requested that the Government of Chad investigate the presence of children in the Chadian National Army in Abeche, Goz Beida and Iriba. In September and November 2006, the Chadian Minister of Defense visited Am-Timan, Abeche and Adre to look personally into the issue with the aim of stopping the recruitment and association of children in the Chadian National Army. The Minister ordered the military leadership not to recruit children, even in situations where children might express their intention to join the Chadian National Army. A memorandum was issued by the Minister of Defense stating that the recruitment of children below the age of 18 was prohibited and non-compliance with that directive would be sanctioned by the Chadian National Army.

24. It should be noted that the cohesion of the Chadian National Army chain of command and the level of discipline of troops is questionable and it casts into doubt the degree to which policy-level commitments and directives are translated into action by individual field commanders and their orders followed. This is of particular relevance, as United Nations sources confirm in one instance that in Goz Beida Dar Sila department, 50 children around 12 years of age were identified as being associated with the Chadian National Army.

25. In 2006 and before its integration with the Chadian National Army, the United Front for Change recruited children on a large scale. The proportion of children was estimated at more than 25 per cent of the total composition of the armed group, with a number of them believed to be below the age of 15 years. In an indicative example, in the Gourkouma training camp, 90 children were confirmed present in four of the brigades of the United Front for Change.

26. While girls associated with armed forces and groups seem to be a limited issue in Chad, there is an exceptional situation in the area of Guereda Dar Tama department, where 50 girls were allegedly associated with the United Front for Change forces.

27. It is important to note that the Chadian National Army has explicitly declined to accept children into its ranks from the United Front for Change faction, with which it signed a peace agreement in December 2006. The Government has also requested the support of the United Nations to address the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of children associated with the faction. Accordingly, the Government of Chad has begun to release children from the United Front for Change faction, with 40 of these children released in January 2007 in N'Djamena, with 339 children expected to be released in Mongo in June 2007.

Chadian armed opposition groups and Sudanese rebel movements in eastern Chad

28. In its Paris statement, the Chadian delegation presented an allegation that more than 1,000 children had been recruited by the Sudanese Liberation Army in refugee camps in the east of the country. The statement also highlighted the presence of hundreds of children within the Union of Forces for Democracy and Development (Union des forces pour la democratie et le developpement). The Chadian National Army claims that a significant proportion of the Union of Forces for Democracy and Development prisoners that had been captured during combat in Abeche in November 2006 were children.

29. Massive recruitments among the refugee and internally displaced persons communities in eastern Chad by Sudanese rebels in March and April 2006 led to public actions by the international community. On 28 April 2006, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees sent me a letter highlighting the deteriorating situation of the Sudanese refugees and internally displaced persons in eastern Chad and expressing his concern regarding instances of forced recruitment. In a meeting with the President of Chad on 11 May 2006, the United Nations Emergency Relief Coordinator also expressed serious concern over the recruitment in and around refugee camps and internally displaced person sites and the increasing militarization of refugee camps. In his briefing to the Security Council on 19 May 2006, he stressed that the recruitment of refugees and internally displaced persons, including children, was a major concern in Chad-Sudan border areas.

30. The majority of the 12 refugee camps in eastern Chad have experienced recruitment of Sudanese children, mainly by the Sudan Liberation Army and the Justice and Equality Movement. Recruitment has been carried out forcibly, with reports of acts of torture as a coercive means, as well as by appeals to the sense of duty towards the homeland and motivations of refugees for revenge. A level of complicity among some refugee leaders, refugee schoolteachers and local Chadian authorities has been signalled.

31. In eastern Chad, there is also a new trend of creating local self-defence ethnic-based village militias to protect the community in a growing climate of insecurity. While this phenomenon is fairly new and thus not yet well documented, children have been identified in these militias, sometimes encouraged by the community leaders to join the movement.

32. With the increased militarization of eastern Chad, accompanied by a higher number of internally displaced persons, recruitment of children continues to be a pressing protection issue. For reasons highlighted earlier, it is not possible at this juncture to identify with a degree of certainty those responsible for recruitment. However, there are indications that inter-ethnic violence and the appearance of the *toro-boros* and a Chadian self-defence movement composed mainly of the Dadjo clan group has resulted in widespread child recruitment. It should be noted that two agreements, one between the Dadjos and the Justice and Equality Movement signed in September 2006 and the other between the Dadjos and the Zaghawas in November 2006, stipulated that in exchange for arms and training, the Dadjos would provide the young people to be trained. Given the cultural context, it is likely that some of the young people provided by the Dadjos are below the age of 18 years.

33. Other indicative examples during the reporting period include:

(a) In January 2007, nine refugee children, between 13 and 17 years of age, were recruited in the surrounding perimeters of the refugee camp of Djabal in Goz Beida (Dar Sila department) by the *toro boras*;

(b) In January 2007, 39 children from the refugee camp of Breidjing were recruited by Sudanese rebels;

(c) In the period December 2006-January 2007, more than 40 children associated with armed forces and groups required medical care for injuries related to combat. At least 20 of the children were estimated to be below the age of 15 years.

Sexual violence

34. Rape and other grave sexual violence and abuse remains a taboo subject in most regions of Chad. Therefore, it is difficult to obtain comprehensive information on the number of victims and survivors of sexual violence and the proportion of such incidents perpetrated by members of armed forces and groups. There are indications, however, that in many cases perpetrators come from the local community of the survivors. Most of the time, the issues of rape and sexual violence are dealt with at the community level and through local arrangements, such as financial compensation by the family of the perpetrator to that of the survivor, but with little consideration for medical and psychosocial support for the victim. Perpetrators are rarely, if ever, brought to justice for such crimes. The climate of impunity and stigmatization of girls and women who have been raped discourages victims from reporting cases to authorities.

35. Cases of sexual violence within the refugee and internally displaced person populations in the east of the country are common. Approximately 100 cases are documented every year, but humanitarian agencies estimate that many more cases remain unreported. Girls and women are especially vulnerable when they leave the immediate vicinity of internally displaced person sites.

36. During the first three months of 2007, 139 cases of sexual and gender-based violence were reported in the 12 refugee camps in the eastern region.

37. Specific indicative examples of sexual violence during the reporting period include:

(a) In October 2006, two girls, aged 9 and 14, living at the refugee camp of Treguine were raped; there is no information on the identity of the perpetrators as civilians or members of an armed group;

(b) In March 2007, a three-year-old girl was raped by a man in Gaga refugee camp. While an agreement for financial compensation of the girl's family was being negotiated, the perpetrator was released from custody and absconded to Abeche. It is believed that he paid a fee for his release to the local administrative authority;

(c) In May 2007 in N'Djamena, a 10-year-old mentally handicapped girl was raped by an unidentified man; another girl was severely beaten and gang raped by unknown assailants. These cases are under police investigation.

38. It should be noted that to date there is no documentation available of prosecutions of perpetrators of crimes of sexual violence.

Abductions

39. Abduction of children in eastern Chad is multifaceted in nature. On the one hand, there is indication that abduction occurs for the purposes of recruitment into armed groups. For example, in the Guereda area there were confirmed reports that in order to augment their forces, the United Front for Change abducted children while on their way to school or to the market, and these children are among those who were demobilized in February 2007, as highlighted above. However, current information suggests that the main type of abduction of children in eastern Chad is for reasons of forced marriage, a common practice also in Darfur. Girls as young as 12 years old are taken and forcibly married. Another practice that seems prevalent in both the east and the south of the country is the abduction of children for ransom. It should be noted that, in general, the abduction of children is not a prominent characteristic of the conflict in Chad.

40. Specific examples of abductions during the reporting period include:

(a) In August 2006, in the villages of Mankoi and Gadang (Gagal), 11 children were abducted by armed men. A ransom was paid and 10 children were returned to their community while one child was killed by the perpetrators;

(b) In March 2006, in Guereda, 150 children were reported abducted and the bodies of 30 of them were later found;

(c) Between June and December 2006, more than 80 children were reported abducted in the community of Mayo-Kebbi West, in the south of Chad, for unclear motivations.

Killing and maiming

41. The conflict and volatile situation in the eastern region of Chad, marked by increased militarization of the area and more readily available small arms and light weapons, have resulted in a far greater vulnerability of children and increased child deaths and maiming. Also of grave concern are deaths and maiming of children related specifically to the presence of unexploded ordnance (UXOs) and landmines. Demining activities in the north of the country have not been completed and as a result this area is inaccessible to the humanitarian community due to the large presence of UXOs and landmines. Eastern Chad also remains quite hazardous due to the fighting over the past several years. Chad counts among the top 10 countries in the world in terms of victims of landmines and UXOs.

42. In 2006, 142 victims of landmines and UXOs were documented, of which 62 were children (48 injured and 14 killed). In 2007, 128 victims of landmines and UXOs were documented, of which 107 were children (85 injured and 22 killed). All children were victims of UXOs, which are the result of military engagements in 2006 and 2007. The average age of child victims of landmines and UXOs in Chad is 12 years.

43. In an indicative example, in May 2007, in the internally displaced person site of Aradip, an 11-year-old child was killed and a 6- and 8-year-old were injured when a partially buried grenade exploded while they were playing. In May 2007, four children were playing with a UXO in Zaigueye when it exploded, killing two of the children and maiming the others.

Attacks on schools and hospitals

44. There is neither evidence nor documentation available on systematic attacks on schools and hospitals by the armed forces or groups.

Denial of humanitarian access and targeting of humanitarian personnel and assets

45. There are a worrying number of incidents recorded of the targeting of humanitarian personnel and assets by parties, which has seriously hampered the work of humanitarian organizations in the country.

46. The security situation on roads in the eastern part of the country has deteriorated to the point where the humanitarian transfers in convoys to the 12 refugee camps require gendarmes to escort them in order to protect them from banditry and rebel actions. As noted above, an addendum to the memorandum of understanding between UNHCR and the Government of Chad was agreed in December 2006 to increase the number of gendarmes (which currently total 325) responsible for security in and around the 12 refugee camps. However, this agreement has not yet been effectively implemented.

47. An indication of the scale of the problem is the fact that in 2006, 118 humanitarian vehicles were stolen by armed persons, with 29 thefts in the month of December 2006 alone. Other indicative examples during the reporting period include:

(a) In May 2006, a United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) staff member was seriously injured by gunfire in Abeche and the vehicle was stolen by armed men;

(b) In December 2006, 40 kilometres from Abeche on the road to Goz Beida, a convoy of three vehicles from the non-governmental organization Oxfam was attacked by armed men, and approximately US$ 44,000 was stolen along with other materials;

(c) In March 2007 in Adre, a health centre managed by Médecins Sans Frontières had to cease the provision of medical services because of threats against medical staff and intimidation of civilian patients by the Chadian National Army. About 90 per cent of the patients being treated at the centre were Chadian National Army personnel injured in conflict with Chadian armed opposition groups.

Follow-up and programmatic response to violations

48. It is acknowledged that the capacity of the Government of Chad and international and local child protection actors to address a wide range of child rights violations in Chad is still limited. A critical priority of the international community is to reinforce the capacity of the Government of Chad to respond in a timely and comprehensive manner to grave child rights violations. The Government of Chad signed and ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1990, and ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention on child recruitment in 2002. However, the commensurate process of reform and implementation of national child protection legislation in line with these international commitments has been slow.

49. It should be noted that dialogue has been established between UNICEF and the Government of Chad leading to the signature in April 2007 of a protocol of agreement on protecting children who are victims of armed conflicts and on their sustainable reintegration into communities and families. Under this agreement, the Government of Chad and UNICEF commit to working together and with partners in ensuring protection and services for children associated with armed forces and groups within the framework of the Paris Principles signed by the Government of Chad in February 2007.

50. A strategy on prevention, release and reintegration of children associated with the armed forces and groups is currently being developed by a consortium of partners including four government ministries, five United Nations agencies, four international non-governmental organizations, two local non-governmental organizations and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) as an observer. An operational framework will be developed by the partners to guide the work related to the prevention of recruitment of children, the modalities of their release and transit care methodology, and to elaborate a social and economic reintegration mechanism within families and communities according to the identified needs of each child.

51. Programmes of prevention and response to sexual and gender-based violence exist on a limited scale in the eastern part of Chad. In each of the 12 refugee camps, a specific standard operating procedure for the prevention and response to sexual and gender-based violence is being developed with the active participation of relevant humanitarian agencies, partners and local authorities and with representation of the refugee community. UNICEF works with UNHCR,

Cooperazione Internazionale in Goz Beida and the International Medical Corps in Iriba and Guereda, offering medical and psychosocial services to survivors. Christian Children's Fund also has a programme of sensitization and prevention of sexual violence.

52. In May 2007, UNHCR in Abeche organized a series of three workshops in the eastern region aimed at increasing the awareness and strengthening the capacity of the national and local administrative, judiciary, military and traditional authorities to respond effectively to the protection needs of refugees and internally displaced persons in eastern Chad. Particular reference was made to the need to prevent and respond to incidents of child recruitment.

53. Unaccompanied or separated children are particularly vulnerable to the risk of recruitment. Family tracing activities have been initiated and in November 2005 a memorandum of understanding was signed between ICRC, UNHCR and UNICEF to facilitate information-sharing on unaccompanied minors and separated children in the 12 refugee camps of eastern Chad. Identification and documentation of separated and unaccompanied children is ongoing throughout 2007.

54. Due to the militarization of eastern Chad and the increased number of reports of recruitment occurring in and around refugee camps and internally displaced person sites, as well as circulation of firearms in the camps, UNHCR and its partners have stepped up efforts to raise awareness among refugees on the imperative of maintaining the civilian and humanitarian character of the camps and their protection under international law. An important factor in recruitment of young men and minors is the absence of alternatives, including secondary education and other programmes for youth. In this regard, a pilot project for secondary education has been launched in Bahai and vocational training activities are ongoing in all camps. It is a priority to strengthen these initiatives.

55. UNICEF and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) are conducting an awareness-raising programme on landmines and UXO education in collaboration with the National High Commission on Demining. The programme is prepared in nine different local languages. Between November 2006 and June 2007 there were sensitization campaigns for all refugee camp populations as well as surrounding communities. It is anticipated that this programme will be extended to all the camps for Central African Republic refugees in the south, as well as the major cities in the east and in N'Djamena. In addition, the programme has undertaken prevention and awareness-training in eight teacher-training schools. To date, more than 5,500 teacher trainees have benefited from this programme, with similar initiatives for teachers in 15 internally displaced person sites.

56. UNHCR, UNICEF and international non-governmental organization partners have also collaborated to establish child protection mechanisms within refugee camps and internally displaced person sites, including programmes of psychosocial support within these communities. As a programmatic response against child rights violations, UNICEF has supported international non-governmental organizations in establishing child well-being committees (29 committees have been established in Gouroukoun and 6 in Koubigou) and child-friendly spaces (4 in Gaga and Farchana, 2 in Touloum, 2 in Iridimi, 1 in Amnaback, 1 in Gouroukoun, 1 in Koubigou) through which child rights violations are reported. Furthermore, social workers are being trained in child rights violations monitoring where these structures have been put in place.

IV. Recommendations

57. I am deeply concerned by the grave violations of children's rights and international humanitarian law in Chad, including the recruitment and association of children with the Chadian government forces, Chadian armed opposition groups, Chadian self-defence militias and Sudanese rebel groups operating in Chad, in violation of applicable international law. I appeal to these armed forces and groups to immediately cease such practices and identify, release and reintegrate into their communities all children associated with their forces with the support of the United Nations and other child protection actors.

58. I welcome the recently signed Protocol of Agreement on Protecting Children Victims of Armed Conflict and their Sustainable Reintegration between the Government of Chad and UNICEF, in line with the Paris Commitments to Protect Children from Unlawful Recruitment and Use by Armed Forces and Armed Groups and Paris Principles: Principles and Guidelines on Children Associated with Armed Forces or Armed Groups. I urge the Government on the basis of this commitment, and with the support of the United Nations, to develop an action plan ensuring prevention of child recruitment and transparent procedures for the release and verification of children in its forces. Furthermore, I ask the Government of Chad to assume its role in coordinating the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of children associated with fighting forces through the establishment of an appropriate national institution, with the support of the international community.

59. Cognizant of the challenges in identifying Chadian armed opposition groups and leaders and the fluidity of alliances and groupings, I ask the resident coordinator and the United Nations Country Team to continue to seek to establish systematic dialogue with parties to the conflict, with the aim of preparing action plans to end recruitment and association of children with armed forces and groups as well as other grave violations of children's rights and international humanitarian law, in accordance with Security Council resolutions on children and armed conflict.

60. I am also deeply concerned about the increasing militarization of eastern Chad and the grave implications for the security and safety of the civilian population, especially the most vulnerable groups such as refugees and internally displaced persons, and I urge the Government of Chad to take measures to assert security in the east, including by ceasing to mobilize and arm self-defence militias and by recovering the arms provided to these militias.

61. Furthermore, I reiterate the recommendation in my recent report on Chad and the Central African Republic (S/2007/97) that the Government of Chad engage with the international community for increased security and protection of the civilian populations in and around the refugee camps and internally displaced persons sites.

62. The widespread targeting of humanitarian personnel and assets is unacceptable, and the Government of Chad, as well as all armed groups operating in Chad, must assume full responsibility under international humanitarian law, with the support of the international community, in ensuring the safety of humanitarian workers, the inviolability of their equipment and their timely access to populations in need of humanitarian assistance.

63. I appeal to the Government of Chad to address the prevailing culture of impunity for violations against children's rights by strengthening its child protection capacity and the commitment of law enforcement and judiciary officials; criminalizing the recruitment and use of child soldiers under domestic laws and

taking measures accordingly against any individuals responsible for such practices; and rigorously investigating and prosecuting other crimes against children, such as rape, grave sexual violence, unlawful killing and abduction. Furthermore, the Government, with the support of the international community, must consider the establishment of specialized gender- and child-sensitive units in the Chadian police service and gendarmerie, and ensure systematic training in child rights and protection of serving members and all new police, gendarmes and army recruits.

64. I commend the commitment of the Government of Chad in its ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocols, and encourage the Government to undertake, as a matter of priority and with the support of the United Nations, the required reform of national legislation for the protection of children to bring Chad in line with its international obligations.

65. I am deeply concerned about the killing and maiming of children, especially as a result of UXOs and landmines. I recognize the efforts that are being made by the United Nations and non-governmental organizations through the National High Commission on Demining and encourage the continuation and strengthening of this campaign. I urge, as a matter of priority, the institution of demining and depolluting programmes, particularly in northern and eastern Chad.

66. All relevant United Nations entities as well as international non-governmental organizations need to strengthen their efforts in support of national authorities and civil society and to expand the scope of their child protection programming, monitoring and advocacy. Those humanitarian actors who do not have an operational presence in the country must consider establishing such capacity, with an emphasis on eastern Chad.

67. I appeal to the international donor community to undertake greater and more long-term commitment of resources for the United Nations operational entities, international and national non-governmental organizations and civil society partners for critical child protection activities, including monitoring, reporting and all response mechanisms.

68. Given the regional dimension of the crisis, involving Chad, the Sudan and the Central African Republic, and the grave implications for children, the United Nations should ensure that mechanisms are in place for information exchange and cooperation between respective United Nations country teams and peacekeeping missions on child protection issues such as cross-border abductions and release and reintegration of children.

69. Recognizing that sustainable peace and development is ultimately the only way to safeguard the rights of children, I urge the Government of Chad and the Chadian armed opposition groups to enter into a comprehensive peace process and to ensure that the eventual agreement makes explicit provision for the protection, rehabilitation and reintegration of children. I reiterate my appeal to the Governments of Chad and the Sudan to muster the political will to establish durable peace, security and the rule of law in the region, beginning with implementation of the Tripoli Agreement, the Humanitarian Ceasefire Agreement (the N'Djamena Agreement) and the Riyadh Agreement. It is only when all parties to the conflict begin to encourage social cohesion among ethnic groups and communities that we can bring to an end the ongoing conflict that is taking a tremendous toll on the lives and well-being of children.